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USAID/OTI BURKINA FASO REGIONAL PROGRAM

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT: OCTOBER 1, 2020 – MARCH 31, 2021

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ACRONYMS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BFRP	Burkina Faso Regional Program
CBHW	Community-based health workers
CENI	National Independent Electoral Commission
CO	Contracting Officer
CR	Country Representative
CVE	Countering violent extremism
DCOP	Deputy chief of party
DDGS	Direct Distribution of Goods and Services
EAI	Equal Access International
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
FAA	Fixed amount award
FCFA	Franc CFA
FDS	Burkinabè defense and security forces
FER	Final evaluation report
FGD	Focus group discussion
FPA	Field program assistant
GM	Grants manager
GMU	Grants Management Unit
GSIM	Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims
HEAT	Hostile environmental awareness training
ID	Identity document
IDP	Internally displaced person
IED	Improvised explosive device
IGA	Income generating activity
IQC	Indefinite quantity contract
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
IT	Information technology
JNIM	Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin

KII	Key informant interview
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
Non-GUC	Non-Grants Under Contract
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEE	On Est Ensemble
ONI	Office National d'Identification
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PM	Program manager
PMU	Project management unit
PPR	Program Performance Review
PS	Procurement specialist
REGIS-ER	Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel-Enhanced Resilience
RISE	Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced
SGSM	Senior grants and subcontracts manager
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRS	Strategic Review Session
STTA	Short-term technical assistance
TCN	Third-country national
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
V4P	Voices for Peace
VAT	Value added tax
VDP	Volunteers for the Defense of the Fatherland
VE	Violent extremism
VEO	Violent extremist organization

SECTION I

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Burkina Faso Regional Program (BFRP) works to mitigate the destabilizing effects of continued violence and insecurity by targeting strategic communities in northern and eastern Burkina Faso to find locally led solutions that address the most pressing sources of instability. During the reporting period, the program implemented 78 unique activities, representing \$5,496,128 in direct support through engagement with community leaders, civil society organizations, and authorities on the front lines of the conflict in order to respond to community needs and support stability on multiple fronts throughout the country. BFRP continued to implement activities in all 21 of the communes targeted during the previous reporting period, including:

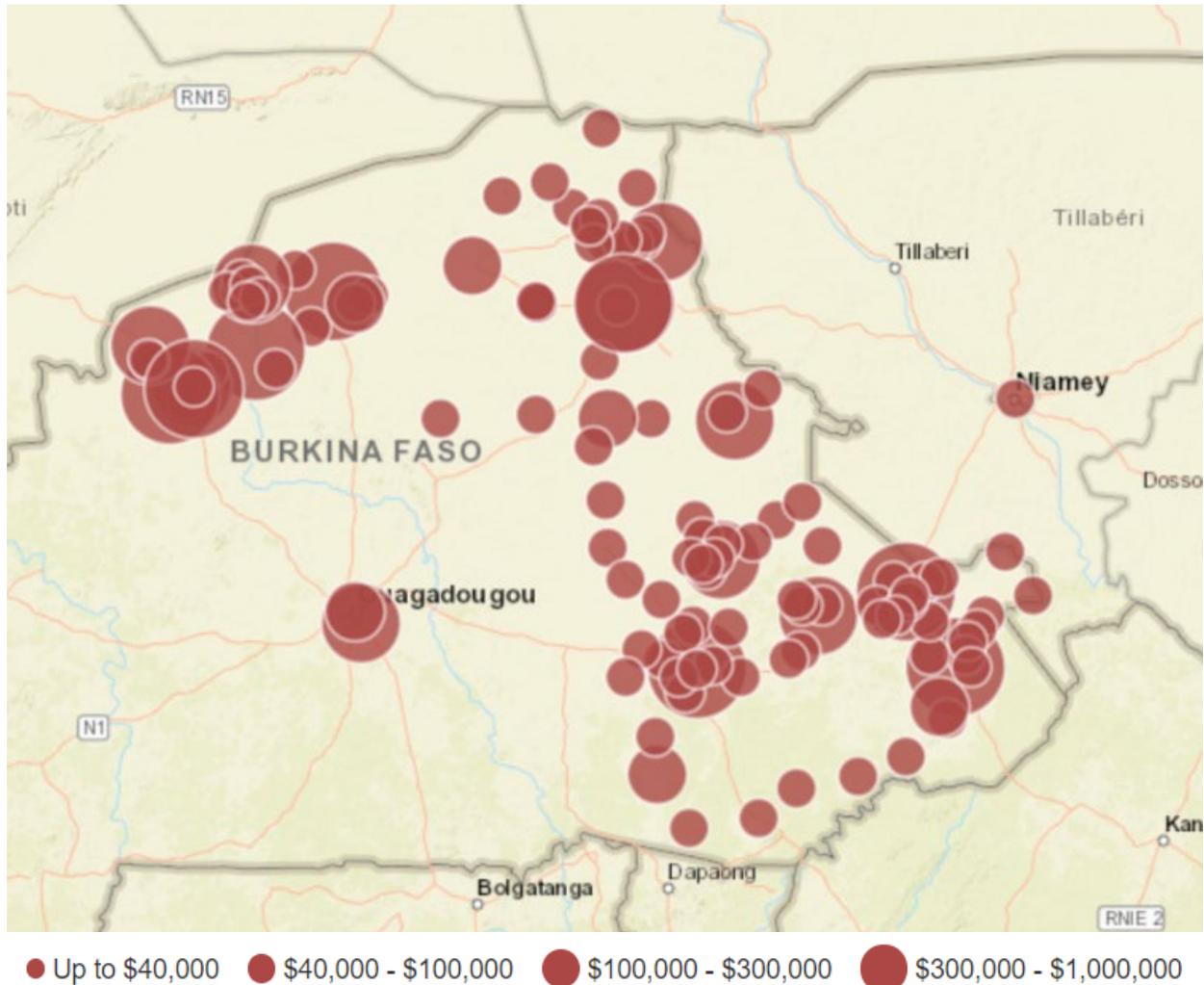
- Five in the Sahel region
- Six in the Nord region,
- Seven in the Est region, and
- Three in the Centre-Est region.

During this period, the program remained adaptive to the dynamic country context, employed sequencing and layering to amplify impact across multiple activities, and carefully considered partner, beneficiary, and staff safety and security at each step. In December 2020, a year before expected program closeout, BFRP took the opportunity to reassess its target communes to determine where it could make the greatest impact in its remaining time. Based on the context of each commune's outstanding needs, BFRP decided to deprioritize programming in the three communes of the Centre-Est region and two communes of the Est region for the remainder of the program. With this sharpened geographic focus, BFRP will ensure that its final year of programming builds on existing community-led gains towards greater stability, while retaining the option for one-off programming in other communes in response to unique windows of opportunity. The revised set of 16 target communes as of December 2020 includes:

- Five in the Sahel region
- Six in the Nord region, and
- Five in the Est region.

Exhibit I below portrays the geographic coverage of BFRP programming to date with the size of the circle corresponding to the cumulative funding programmed in that location. The 16 locations retained as target communes this period align with locations indicated by medium to large circles where funding and corresponding impact has been greatest.

EXHIBIT I. BFRP PROGRAMMING MAP



In addition to working in target communes this period, and thanks to improved security, BFRP successfully resumed and completed a health clinic rehabilitation activity that had been suspended since August 2019 due to growing insecurity in the town. BFRP relaunched the activity to fully rehabilitate the clinic's nursing facilities. BFRP also completed activities that reached additional communes in the Sahel and Est regions, including a first aid training for volunteer emergency health workers in the Sahel region, and a youth leadership campaign in the Est region. These latter activities required a combination of adaptive approaches for remote management and transporting beneficiaries to nearby communes for activity implementation when possible due to significant security challenges in the above communes.

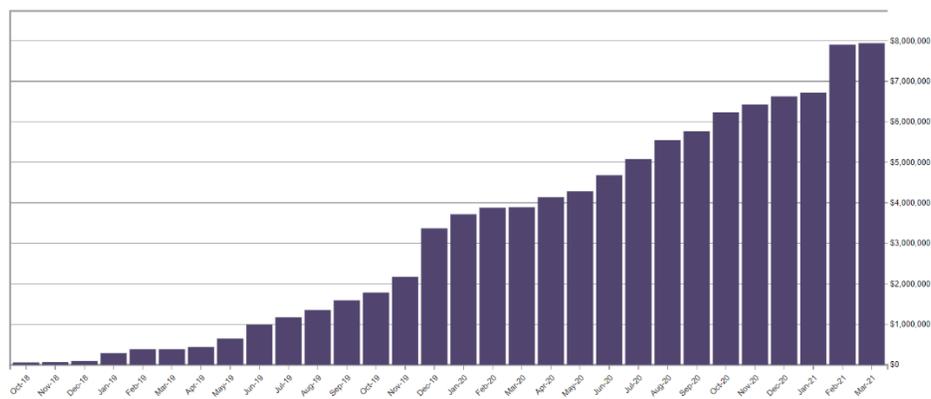
Over this reporting period, BFRP continued to implement activities based on its refined strategy resulting from the findings and conclusions of its Program Performance Review (PPR) in April 2020. The strategy maintained the program's goal to support stability in Burkina Faso with a main objective to mitigate the destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity. The program's Strategic Review Session (SRS) in February 2021 determined that the strategy should remain in effect for the final year of the program, retaining the same four clusters:

- Cluster 1.1 Empower community leaders
- Cluster 1.2 Mitigate livelihood disruption and foster adaptive economic opportunities
- Cluster 1.3 Revitalize traditional community mechanisms
- Cluster 1.4 Enable critical local service delivery

Cluster 1.3 tends to be cross-cutting and is often applicable to activities under the other three clusters. BFRP’s strategic framework provides context-driven problem statements and defines the specific outcomes used by BFRP to elaborate theories of change for each activity, supporting BFRP’s primary objective and program goal.

To date, BFRP has cleared \$7,942,839 in programming, as shown in Exhibit 2, with over \$2,176,560 in new programming cleared for 35 new activities this period. In February 2021, BFRP cleared over \$1.0 million in new activities, representing the most active month in activity development measured by funding since December 2019.

EXHIBIT 2. CUMULATIVE CLEARED ACTIVITY FUNDING SINCE BFRP LAUNCH



SECTION 2

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The current country context in Burkina Faso is shaped primarily by the deteriorating security environment, fragile state institutions up against complex domestic social and political challenges, and compounding cross-border dynamics from neighboring countries. Compared to the previous reporting period, Burkina Faso experienced an overall decline in the number of violent incidents and fatalities during this reporting period, despite continued violent extremist organization (VEO) activity, intensified military operations, and incidents of localized conflict. In terms of demographics, record numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) placed an unprecedented strain on communities, while a wave of COVID-19 infections surged through the country amidst the ongoing global pandemic. In domestic politics, the re-election of President Roch Marc Christian Kabore and legislative elections in November 2020 dominated the news, and the government further extended its 2018 State of Emergency covering large swaths of the country's conflict-affected regions. The large cities of Burkina Faso, particularly Ouagadougou, experienced an uptick in crime, with increased cross-border crime and terrorist activity likewise along the country's southern border. Regional security dynamics continue to be felt in Burkina Faso, especially the instability and counterterrorism operations underway in Mali and Niger, and the effects of global climate change on resource and land rights issues.

SECURITY CONTEXT AND TRENDS

Security incidents continue to impact the Sahel region more than any other region in Burkina Faso, as the area serves as the gateway for and epicenter of terrorist activity coming from Mali and Niger. Conditions in the Est region, where terrorists enjoy free movement and evade detection among the forests and porous borders of Niger, Benin, and Togo, continue to deteriorate with recurrent attacks and terrorist activity. The Nord region, a transit and training corridor for VEOs along the border with central Mali, also has seen continued violence from armed groups this period, largely in BFRP target communes. The Centre-Nord region, although not a region with BFRP programming, constitutes a corridor for armed groups to connect the Sahel, Est and the Boucle du Mouhoun regions, and hosts the highest population of IDPs. The current trends show increased VEO activity toward the south, namely the Hauts-Bassins and Cascades regions bordering Cote d'Ivoire, the Sud-Ouest region bordering both Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, and to some extent, the Centre-Est region bordering Togo and Ghana.

During this period, most incidents and attacks carried out by armed groups went unclaimed. This situation makes it difficult to identify the armed groups that are active across the country, although the two most prolific groups remain the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, also known by its Arabic name Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). Local authorities and security forces have attributed these groups to many unclaimed attacks based on the color of banners carried by the attackers, with ISGS typically carrying banners in black and JNIM typically carrying banners in white. While these groups are active internationally, with JNIM affiliated with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), they rely on multiple local subgroups that leverage local grievances and

conflict drivers to carry out attacks and gain influence in Burkina Faso. Beyond these armed groups, there also are local groups of bandits who take advantage of the poor security context to carry out cattle theft and robberies on local populations.

The modus operandi of VEOs in Burkina Faso did not markedly change during this period. For example, the dynamic of armed clashes between ISGS and JNIM fighters continued from the previous period, which was at odds with the relative coexistence that reigned leading up to and into the first half of 2020. VEOs continued to conduct direct attacks against volunteer fighters from the Volunteers for the Defense of the Fatherland (VDPs), the Burkinabe defense and security forces (FDS), and civilian targets, although civilian fatalities decreased in this reporting period compared to previous periods. Attacks against civilian populations are most often cited as acts of reprisal for non-compliance with various rules imposed by VEOs and for alleged collaboration with the FDS. Newly enlisted VDPs have become prime targets for attacks by VEOs. In contrast, attacks against FDS declined considerably during this period.

Several communes in the Nord, Est, and Sahel regions suffered attacks by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) during this period. In some recent cases, security forces or civilian populations discovered IEDs and managed to neutralize them prior to finding their targets; these IEDs often are intended for FDS but are regularly detonated inadvertently by innocent civilians. This trend is a sign that security forces have become more familiar with IEDs and that there is better collaboration between security forces and the population in mitigating this threat. Based on this shift in context, BFRP will launch an IED awareness raising campaign during the next reporting period.

Targeted kidnappings and assassinations against local populations and particularly community leaders, VDPs, members of their families, and of the Koglweogo self-defense groups have continued. By targeting these victims, VEOs are able to deliver a blow to community morale and remove actors actively working against them, rendering communities more vulnerable to the influence of VEOs.

While extremist groups inflict the greatest toll on local communities in terms of numbers of incidents and fatalities, the security context is further complicated by allegations of attacks perpetrated by FDS and community-based militias on civilian populations in Burkina Faso. Whether civilians are deliberately targeted by FDS or are collateral victims to intensified military operations, violence against civilians deeply undermines trust in the government, fuels grievances that drive conflict, and generates support for VEOs. Incidents of FDS abuses according to data compiled by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and publicly available are included in the full security incident and political events timeline covering the reporting period in Annex A.

These trends notwithstanding, the number of security incidents and fatalities due to terrorism and localized conflict decreased considerably this period. According to ACLED, during the period from October 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, approximately 210 security incidents were reported, resulting in 290 fatalities, a stark decrease from the 359 incidents and 617 fatalities reported during the April 1 to September 30, 2020 period. The number of incidents and fatalities by month since January 2020 is shown in the table below (see Exhibit 3), along with IDP numbers reported by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as further insight into the overall context. The inverse relationship between IDP

numbers and terrorism is noteworthy especially as IDP numbers are at all-time highs and terrorism incidents and fatalities have decreased.

EXHIBIT 3. MONTHLY INCIDENTS AND FATALITIES IN BURKINA FASO WITH IDP NUMBERS

MONTH	INCIDENTS ¹	FATALITIES ²	TOTAL IDPS
January 2020	64	196	613,792
February 2020	52	193	779,741
March 2020	61	237	838,548
PREVIOUS REPORTING PERIOD			
April 2020	58	132	848,329
May 2020	82	182	921,471
June 2020	47	90	N/A
July 2020	57	58	978,744
August 2020	51	48	1,013,234
September 2020	64	107	1,034,609
Subtotal	359	617	N/A
CURRENT REPORTING PERIOD			
October 2020	47	89	N/A
November 2020	37	70	1,049,767
December 2020	31	23	1,074,993
January 2021	58	71	1,097,462
February 2021	37	37	1,121,960
March 2021	42	60	1,147,699
Subtotal	210	290	N/A

Security analysts in Burkina Faso have cited numerous contributing factors to explain the relative lull in terror incidents and fatalities, including:

- The establishment and operationalization of VDPs in several localities in the regions helped to limit terrorist infiltration into certain villages.
- Increased patrols of security forces and the various operations carried out jointly with the allied forces of Barkhane and the G5 Sahel force.
- The infighting between different VEOs in Burkina Faso, notably between GSIM and ISGS, significantly weakened their operations.
- The communes most vulnerable to attacks have seen high displacement of local populations seeking shelter in more secure communes.
- Several communes have reported fighters laying down their weapons and seeking reintegration into their communities. These cases of surrender could be explained by the difficult conditions these local fighters endure in terrorist ranks, the constant pressure from FDS operations and VDPs narrowing in on their movements, and lost

¹ Incidents reported here are not independently verified by BFRP. They include abductions, air and drone strikes, armed clashes, attacks, grenades, IEDs, sexual violence, shelling/artillery/missile attacks. The vast majority of reported incidents are attributed to JNIM, ISGS, unidentified armed groups, FDS, communal militias, and VDPs.

² Fatalities reported here include civilian and military deaths only and does not count JNIM, ISGS, or unidentified armed group members.

motivation as the conflict drags on. For the moment, no official sources have confirmed these surrenders. However, local and national press outlets have reported that certain community leaders and authorities have allegedly played a role in the surrenders.

- Rumors of local cease fires and potential negotiations have been reported in several areas of Burkina Faso including the Sahel, Nord, and Est regions. In some localities, community leaders are said to be engaged in negotiations with local armed groups to put an end to hostilities. Though these negotiations may be a factor in the lull in terrorist activity, they raise concerns for ongoing community security. Most local leaders are not trained in tactics for negotiating with VEOs and the central government does not condone such negotiations. Thinking only of short-term security for their communities, leaders may be pressured into making compromises that could undermine security in the medium or long terms, or impede on individual freedoms. Negotiation also may be a strategy for VEOs to continue to impose their ideologies at the local level.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

On the social level, the population of IDPs was well over 1,000,000 at the beginning of the reporting period and continued to rise throughout the period. According to the latest OCHA report, the number of IDPs in the country in March 2021 was estimated at 1,147,699 people, the majority of whom are women and children. Terrorist activity in the Sahel and Centre-Nord regions especially continued to generate massive displacement toward more secure areas, with IDPs staying with host families or in camps. Displacement creates tensions in host communities and strains social cohesion between IDPs and host populations who are forced to share their already scarce resources. Even in communes that have not seen deadly attacks, VEOs also routinely harass local populations via threats, the imposition of *Zakat* and Sharia law, and cattle theft, which also drive populations to leave. Traditionally, *Zakat* is a form of alms-giving, or an amount of money, livestock, or crops given voluntarily by Muslims to poor people for charity. Terror groups have imposed *Zakat* on populations to fund their activities, thereby leaving civilians more vulnerable to financial hardship and to attack by those same groups.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

On the political level, the current period was marked by presidential and legislative elections in November 2020. Despite the difficult security context, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) held the elections without major incident amidst a peaceful atmosphere. The lack of unity among opposition parties resulted in divided support across opposition candidates, handing the incumbent President Roch Marc Christian Kabore a fast victory in the first round of voting. Observers noted relatively low voter turnout, explained by low enthusiasm for the candidates who failed to coalesce meaningful majorities within the opposition. In addition, several communes did not have open voting stations, and citizens were unable to register to vote due to the presence of VEOs. As such, several tens of thousands of citizens could not exercise their civic rights in the elections. Legislative elections from those communes most impacted by terrorist activity have been postponed until further notice. Similarly, Prime Minister Christophe Dabiré and the legislative branch are under discussion to delay the municipal elections scheduled for May 2021 until later in the year or in 2022, citing important elections reforms that must be undertaken to advance decentralization prior to elections taking place.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DYNAMICS

Burkina Faso has continued cooperating and collaborating with neighboring countries and partner states for regional security. Heads of state from the G5 Sahel countries held a summit in February 2021 in N'djamena, Chad, to assess the military strategy adopted during the January 2020 Pau Summit in France. The heads of state acknowledged that beyond the military effort, the return of local government authorities and the delivery of essential services to fragile communities, as well as the consolidation of rule of law and good governance, are essential to lasting peace. On the eve of the summit, it was announced that 1,200 Chadian soldiers would be sent to the tri-border zone (Burkina Faso-Niger-Mali) as a counterweight to reductions in French forces, whose presence is increasingly under scrutiny by local populations. The joint Task Force Takuba, launched in March 2020 by European militaries and led by France, could reach full operational capacity in the coming months. This force will be based in Gao, Mali, and is tasked with tackling terrorism in the tri-border area and enhancing security in the wider region. The United States also provided significant military assistance to Burkina Faso, including the provision of transportation equipment and training for various units engaged in fighting terrorists.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The reporting period was marked by two different trends in the COVID-19 pandemic. The period from November 2020 to January 2021 brought a surge in community spread infections, with serious cases requiring hospitalizations and, in some cases, leading to death. In December 2020 and January 2021, Burkina Faso recorded 3,745 and 4,051 cases respectively, representing a significant increase compared to the preceding months of October and November 2020, when only 472 and 386 cases had been recorded. This increase might be related to the electoral campaigns which took place in October-November 2020 and gathered large groups of people, in combination with the general non-respect of the COVID-19 mitigation measures decreed by the government. The period from February 2021 through March 2021 was characterized by a downward trend in new COVID-19 cases, with an average of 20 new cases per day. This downward trend is mirrored in several countries of the sub-region and has allowed the various heads of state of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) to consider the imminent reopening of land borders. As of March 31, 2021, the cumulative total number of positive cases in Burkina Faso since the start of the global pandemic is 12,774 cases, including 12,420 recoveries, 149 deaths, and 205 cases under treatment.

SECTION 3

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

During the current reporting period, BFRP implemented a total of 78 activities with \$5,496,128 in funding in the Nord, Sahel, Est, and Centre-Est regions of Burkina Faso across all four program clusters. Thanks to lessons learned from two years of programming, significant scale up of staffing within GMUs and the Ouagadougou office in the prior period, and an improved activity cycle, BFRP sustained a high level of programming reaching all four regions.

BFRP began the period with four GMUs, with one in Dori covering the Sahel region, one in Ouahigouya covering the Nord region, and two in Fada N’Gourma covering the Est and Centre-Est regions. In December 2020, BFRP merged the two Fada N’Gourma GMUs into one to align staffing with the revised set of target communes. As shown by Exhibit 4, BFRP’s GMUs cleared 35 new activities, completed 58 activities, and closed 44 activities this reporting period, with the bulk of this programming in the Sahel, Nord, and Est regions.

EXHIBIT 4. NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES BY REGION, THIS REPORTING PERIOD

REGION	CLEARED	COMPLETED	CLOSED	TOTAL ACTIVITIES UNDER IMPLEMENTATION ³
National ⁴	2	2	4	5
Est	14	26	16	29
Centre-Est	2	1	1	4
Nord	13	16	11	23
Sahel	4	13	12	17
Total	35	58	44	78

Following significant reprogramming of activities that had been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the previous reporting period, BFRP completed 37 activities in October, November, and December 2020, a high proportion of the 58 total activities completed this period. As an indication of the high volume of activities coming to an end during this time, 11 were completed in the last week of November 2020 alone. To keep pace with programming targets and generate a sufficient volume of new programming, BFRP organized brainstorming sessions with each GMU in November 2020 to review target communes, progress against six-month goals in each commune, and generate activity concept ideas responding to the unique and evolving problem sets. This brainstorming resulted in SMT-approved activity development plans for each GMU and roadmaps for pitching concepts through March 2021.

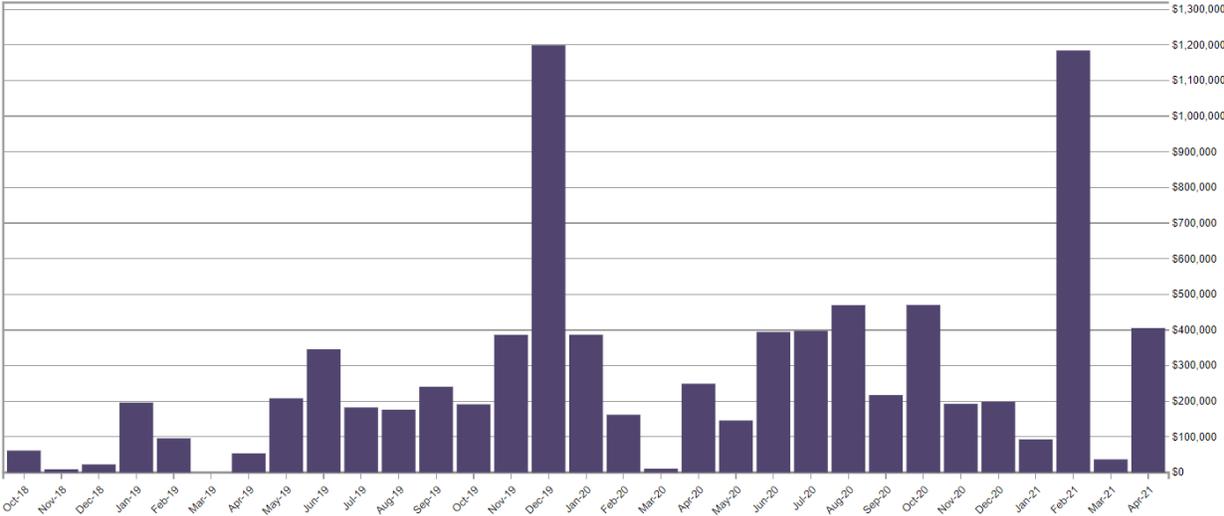
Relying on this brainstorming, BFRP accelerated through 24 activity green lights between December 2020 and March 2021. Whereas the typical activity during BFRP’s first two years averaged around \$30,000 in size, the activities cleared in this reporting period were on average

³As a given activity may be cleared, completed, and closed in the same reporting period, the total number of activities implemented is not the sum of these three columns. Rather, the total number of activities under implementation captures the number of discrete activities active (in Cleared status) at any point during the period.

⁴The Ouagadougou office manages national programming spanning multiple regions and program-wide technical assistance, learning, and support mechanisms.

greater than \$60,000 each, with three activities valued above \$200,000. This reflects BFRP’s efforts to take on larger, longer, and more complex activities in the prior and current reporting periods in line with February 2020 PPR feedback. Correspondingly, and as shown in Exhibit 5, BFRP tied a previous activity development milestone by clearing more than \$1.0 million in new programming in the month of February 2021.

EXHIBIT 5. MONTHLY ACTIVITY CLEARANCE IN FUNDING



The following sections will go into greater detail regarding the activity highlights from each regional office’s programming this period.

NATIONAL PROGRAMMING

During this reporting period, BFRP implemented five multi-regional activities from the Ouagadougou office valued at a total of \$502,180. The Ouagadougou team cleared two new activities worth \$70,429, completed two activities amounting to \$268,016, and closed four activities valued at \$148,294.

Four of the five activities under implementation this period were Non-Grants Under Contract (Non-GUC) Direct Distribution of Goods and Services (DDGS) or Short-Term Technical Assistance (STTA) type activities. For example, an ongoing regional DDGS activity includes directly providing technical radio equipment, IT equipment, and office furniture to four beneficiary radio stations in Nord, Sahel, and Est regions so that community leaders have access to upgraded broadcast capabilities to amplify messages of peace and social cohesion. BFRP also is implementing an STTA activity that assigns engineering expertise to BFRP grantees to improve the program’s and partners’ capacities to plan, carry out, and monitor small-scale construction and rehabilitation works in the field. The Ouagadougou office also manages a regional DDGS activity that serves as a mechanism for information exchange, constructive dialogue, and strengthening the BFRP feedback loop directly with local leaders and grantees. During this period, BFRP organized focus group discussions under this activity between OTI-Senior Management Team (SMT) and government authorities and local leaders from around the Est region.

Highlights from national activities during this period include:

COMMUNITY RADIO REHABILITATION IN FADA

Fada N’Gourma is the capital city of the Est region and lies close to the Niger border. Since violence erupted in 2018, communities have been affected by attacks in the Est region as well as attacks on the other side of the border, in the Tillabery region of Niger. As a result, the town now hosts an estimated 39,000 IDPs. The population remains on high alert for attacks, but rural communities outside of the city have limited access to local radio programming due to deficiencies in the existing transmission power and general capacity of local radio stations. Extending both the capacity of community radio and the reach of broadcast signals was needed to directly reach citizens most affected by ongoing terrorist threats. To address threats posed by VEOs in these areas, BFRP provided a grant to Equal Access International (EAI), an international non-governmental organization with expertise in participatory community media, to rehabilitate a radio station of Fada N’Gourma.

Under this activity, BFRP rehabilitated the community radio station with the ultimate objective of leveraging participatory community radio programming as a tool to build community resilience and offer alternative messaging to counter the influence of VEOs. EAI layered support provided by BFRP with capacity building provided through Voices for Peace (V4P), a five-year USAID-funded program to reduce vulnerability to violent extremism (VE) in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Mali. The V4P program has a network of radio stations in Burkina Faso and builds local communities’ resilience to VE narratives by tapping into a vast array of local actors and resources, including community radio stations, civil society actors, young influencers, local authorities, and community leaders from various ethnic and social backgrounds through community outreach and media strengthening.

STTA PROJECT ENGINEER TAKE 2

In 2020, the BFRP team developed small-scale infrastructure activities spanning rehabilitation of various public works, water sources, schools and educational centers, land recuperation, public markets, and installation of mills and solar-powered street lamps under a non-GUC STTA activity. In order to successfully implement these activities, a qualified engineer is necessary to ensure professional quality by overseeing the engineering and environmental compliance aspects of all infrastructure work. As the BFRP geographical intervention area has expanded with the introduction of an increasing number of infrastructure activities, additional short-term support was added during the reporting period to provide technical assistance to ongoing infrastructure activities. Engineers were engaged to provide technical assessments, cost estimates, environmental monitoring, site visits and overall supervision of works, and other technical work as directed by BFRP’s Operations Manager and Engineer / Environmental Compliance Specialist. The need for ongoing engineering support has continued and will be provided under a different activity.

NORD REGION

BFRP’s programming in the Nord region, managed from the BFRP office in Ouahigouya, implemented or is implementing 23 activities during this period with an estimated total amount of these awards at \$1,256,182. The Nord team cleared 13 new activities valued at \$691,796,

completed 16 new and ongoing activities worth \$781,402, and closed 11 activities worth \$389,452. Across BFRP's clusters, the Nord team implemented:

- Eight activities focused on empowering community leaders,
- Six activities focused on mitigating livelihood disruption and fostering adaptive economic opportunities,
- Eight activities focused on enabling critical local service delivery, and
- One activity that covered empowering community leaders, mitigating livelihood disruption, and enabling local service delivery.

Highlights from BFRP's programming in the Nord region this period include:

OUAHIGOUYA ID DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION CAMPAIGN

While terrorist attacks have not thus far directly targeted the city of Ouahigouya, the area hosts a large community of IDPs who fled violence in surrounding areas. According to the Mayor's office of Ouahigouya, when the activity concept was developed, the number of IDPs in the commune was estimated to be 24,687 persons (4,852 men, 5,965 women and more than 13,870 children). The demand for identity documents by citizens of Ouahigouya and by IDPs has significantly increased. IDPs in particular struggle to obtain birth certificates and/or national ID cards that are necessary to move freely through checkpoints, apply for job opportunities, and get access to social welfare support. On an average day, the demand for ID cards far exceeds the capacity of local authorities in Ouahigouya, and many IDPs and vulnerable populations are unable to absorb the out of pocket costs nor devote the time to pursuing an ID card under ordinary circumstances. To address this shortfall, BFRP supported authorities to issue 2,000 birth certificates and facilitated registration and delivery of ID cards to 10,000 people. This activity is part of an overarching BFRP strategy to deliver identity documents to vulnerable communities in the Nord, Sahel, and Est regions as an example of supporting local essential service delivery. Via these activities, more than 80,000 civil documents have been produced and distributed since the beginning of the program. Additional rounds and new ID card activities were planned or underway at the end of the reporting period.

PEACE COMMITTEE IMPROVES COMMUNITY COHESION

Since the onset of insecurity and the arrival of IDPs in one commune, there has been no permanent framework for meetings or open discussions to bring together leaders and IDPs to find common solutions, reduce tensions, and address stakeholder concerns. In addition, community leaders responsible for managing conflicts and tensions at the community level were not sufficiently equipped to provide appropriate solutions for conflict mitigation. In an effort to increase social stability through open discussion, BFRP supported a local organization to establish a diverse peace committee that brought together relevant community stakeholders, including IDPs, women, youth, and traditional and religious leaders. In March 2021, the peace committee, comprised of 18 local leaders, was trained on conflict management, mediation, and advocacy. After the training, peace committee members organized separate feedback sessions with community members outside the committee to discuss topics of improved community cohesion with a broader audience.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PRODUCTION AND MARKETING CAPACITIES

Since 2016, terrorist threats and attacks have disrupted agricultural production and commercial activities. Women's income-generating activities such as agriculture, livestock husbandry, and small-scale market gardening, have been negatively impacted by the violence. To increase the women's production capacity and improve the system of marketing products in local markets, BFRP worked to train and provide three months of coaching and monitoring in processing techniques, financial management and marketing to 25 women from each of several communes. BFRP also provided a multi-function mill as an important component to help women grind various cereals and grains on site, to make flour and different types of pastes including peanut paste. The women also received training on proper utilization and maintenance of the mill followed by three months of coaching and monitoring in processing techniques. In addition to the mill and training, these women received wheelbarrows and carts to help transport their products to local markets quickly and under more hygienic conditions. The 100 women beneficiaries, representing different villages and ethnicities, learned techniques enabling them to earn more income, hence providing an alternative to the lure of financial incentives offered by VEOs, who target community members in their recruitment efforts.

SAHEL REGION

BFRP's programming in the Sahel region, managed from the Dori office, included 17 activities under implementation during this period valued at \$1,924,347 in the target communes. BFRP's Dori team cleared four new activities worth \$504,259, completed 13 activities valued at \$1,420,088, and closed 12 activities valued at \$1,405,202. Activities implemented in the Sahel region by cluster during this period include:

- Five activities focused on empowering community leaders,
- Four activities focused on mitigating livelihood disruption and fostering adaptive economic opportunities,
- Two activities focused on revitalizing traditional community mechanisms, and
- Six activities focused on enabling critical local service delivery.

Highlights from BFRP's programming in the Sahel region this period include:

FIRST RESPONDER TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN THE SAHEL REGION

Terrorist attacks and threats against health workers in the Sahel region led to the closure of several health centers in remote areas and provoked the relocation of a number of health workers to urban centers. Considering the difficulties associated with traveling to urban centers, many people in rural areas no longer visit health centers for medical services and mostly rely on assistance from community-based health workers. The absence of health workers and the lack of medical and psychological assistance reduces the chances of survival for those in need of urgent medical care, including those injured by terrorist attacks. This absence further fuels local populations' feelings of abandonment by the State. To improve the population's access to first aid in emergency situations in the Sahel region, BFRP worked with local associations to train 104 community-based health workers and volunteers including 35 women. In October and November 2020, first aid specialists trained beneficiaries. Training

covered topics related to common wounds resulting from terrorist attacks, and how to react to critical security incidents through a series of simulations, hands-on practice and role-play sessions, and case studies to make sure participants could respond appropriately to a variety of situations. At the end of the training, each participant received a first aid kit to use when assisting injured community members. A stock of additional first aid kits also was donated to local organizations to allow continued replenishment of first aid supplies to trained health workers.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE: WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Reinforcing women's commitment to countering violent extremism (CVE), BFRP worked to train 30 women in one commune on early warning practices for community safety and security, and specifically how women can contribute to fighting violent extremism in their commune. Women exercise authority within their families, which can be leveraged into a broader positive influence against violence and insecurity across their communities. Therefore, it was essential to have women as the main actors of this activity. Further, by using women's voices to deliver these messages, it increased the impact of key take-aways. Capitalizing on the values of tolerance, adaptability, and flexibility, BFRP transformed these women into peace ambassadors within their community.

YOUTH ENGAGED FOR PEACE

In one commune, seven different ethnic groups cohabited peacefully before inter-ethnic tensions erupted in recent years as a result of VEOs sowing divisions within the community. Following the deterioration of the security situation, community leaders tried to restore peace but lacked the required tools to make their actions effective and sustainable. To reinforce community leaders' commitment to social stability, BFRP worked to strengthen social cohesion in the community through a multifaceted awareness campaign led by young leaders. From February to March 2021, 60 people, including 30 young leaders, 20 customary and religious leaders, and 10 local authorities, benefited from training on social cohesion and community mobilization to help them carry out awareness-raising activities at the community level. These trained leaders went on to share the knowledge they acquired by conducting group discussions on the need to achieve social cohesion through mutual respect and understanding among community members regardless of their backgrounds. Community members appreciated the activity and are optimistic about the impact it will have on peaceful cohabitation.

EST AND CENTRE-EST REGIONS

BFRP's programming in eastern Burkina Faso, managed from the Fada N'Gourma office, included 33 activities under implementation valued at \$1,813,418. These activities covered the target communes in the Est region and in the Centre-Est region. BFRP's Fada team cleared 16 new activities this reporting period valued at \$910,076, completed 27 activities worth \$1,145,296, and closed 17 activities totaling \$855,649. Among the 33 activities under implementation during the current reporting period, the distribution by cluster included:

- 13 activities focused on empowering community leaders,
- Four activities focused on mitigating livelihood disruption and foster adaptive economic opportunities,
- Seven activities focused on revitalizing traditional community mechanisms, and
- Nine activities focused on enabling critical local service delivery.

Highlights from BFRP's programming in eastern Burkina Faso this period include:

YOUTH LEADERS ENGAGE FOR STABILITY

Communes in the Est region are affected by attacks and threats from VEOs, and are becoming increasingly isolated, because insecurity on the main roads is reducing access to transportation. To encourage young leaders to get involved in establishing a peaceful and stable society, BFRP worked to organize a forum that brought together 35 young leaders to promote peace and social stability in their communities. The participants were selected based on their relative influence within the communities and their commitment to promoting peace and social stability in the face of terrorist threats that otherwise aim to weaken the social fabric and erode leaders' capacity to support their communities. Some roads are controlled by extremist groups and the borders of Burkina Faso remain closed, making it difficult for the program's team to access participants. To overcome this challenge, a grantee point of contact coordinated discussions with BFRP remotely and with participants and the facilitator. Training materials were sent to participants prior to the sessions and the facilitator led discussions with participants gathered in a room. The forum was a success according to all participants who affirmed their knowledge of the current national and local security context had improved. They also shared an improved understanding of their roles and responsibilities as youth leaders in fostering peace and stability. Participants identified initiatives they could implement to apply their newly gained knowledge and insights, including an awareness-raising campaign on CVE and implementing income generating activities (IGA) to reduce the vulnerability of youth to recruitment by extremist groups. This innovative way of conducting the forum was appreciated by participants and proved to be an effective way to provide oversight and coordination for activities in less accessible communities.

ENGAGING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN FAIR AND PEACEFUL ELECTIONS IN THE EST REGION

Over the past year, the Est region has grappled with terrorist attacks, organized crime, and land disputes. These conflicts have contributed to rising political tensions and a breakdown of social cohesion between groups, which in turn threatens stability in the region. The tense sociopolitical climate risked deterring many would-be voters, particularly women and youth, from participating in the November 2020 national elections. To address this issue and promote awareness of the electoral process, BFRP engaged with civil society organizations to educate youth and women about peaceful electoral processes and to encourage them to vote in the election. Women and youth constitute the majority of the population in Burkina Faso, with those under 24 years of age representing more than 60% of the population, yet they are often politically and socially marginalized. Their involvement and effective participation in elections contributes to establishing a more stable and democratic society. Moreover, preventing election-related violence can hinder the influence of VEOs in the Est by reducing social friction that they can exploit.

As part of these activities, BFRP trained 30 peace ambassadors in leadership, conflict management, coaching, and social outreach techniques. To amplify their reach, the project produced and distributed 2,600 flyers explaining the voting process and promoting peaceful elections. In addition, BFRP aired 268 radio broadcasts in French, Gourmatchema, Hausa, Fulani, and Mooré promoting mutual acceptance, tolerance, peace, and stability during the

election. The youth ambassadors conducted 422 discussion sessions with 4,236 community members, including women, youth, and community leaders, on maintaining peace and stability before, during, and after the election. Radio messages continued a week after the elections with the goal of continuing to reduce tensions and strengthen social cohesion in the Est region.

REINFORCING SCHOOLS' CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE INTERNALLY DISPLACED STUDENTS IN THE EST REGION

Terrorist attacks and threats have provoked massive population displacements to more secure places across Burkina Faso, generally to the administrative centers of provinces and communes. Schools in the various urban centers of the Est region lack the logistical capacity to accommodate additional students when faced with an influx of displaced children. These schools face multiple challenges, such as overcrowded classrooms and inadequate infrastructure and equipment. These conditions do not facilitate the integration of displaced students into the schools, causing disruptions in the continuation of their education, risking further destabilization of the area and increased tension between host and displaced populations. To help ensure continued education for host and displaced students alike, and to reduce the feeling of abandonment by the State among displaced populations, BFRP provided basic school equipment necessary to accommodate at least 3,800 displaced children, including 1,800 girls. The support targeted 30 schools and consisted of over 4,500 pieces of furniture, including student and teacher desks, chairs, and benches. Through the activity, the grantee then organized a management committee to ensure proper use and maintenance of the equipment. The grantee then trained the management committee as well as the associations representing parents of students on CVE to increase awareness of extremist threats relevant to schools and approaches to combatting terrorism in their communities. In addition, participants received repair kits, including saws, hammers, screwdrivers, and other tools to assist with school equipment repairs.

BRINGING BACK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Since 2016, one commune has been unable to hold an International Women's Day event due to the socio-political and security contexts. Traditionally, the day was an occasion to celebrate women who play an important role in community cohesion, peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding between community members, and have significant influence on youth and the female community. As the community continues to face challenges related to insecurity and violence, a growing number of IDPs, and increasing economic hardships, BFRP worked to hold a celebratory event for International Women's Day. This activity aimed to bring back a sense of normalcy by providing a space for dialogue and solidarity among displaced and host community members. For the first time in five years, women, local authorities, and community stakeholders gathered to watch a celebratory parade of women from different ethnic groups and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Local musicians and artists also entertained the audience with songs and dances conveying messages of peace and unity. One hundred vulnerable IDPs and host community women received a set of materials composed of basins, cooking pots, and portable solar lamps to support their daily activities. In addition to the celebration of International Women's Day, this activity included awareness-raising sessions on women's roles and responsibilities in fostering social stability. The group also broadcast on the local radio messages by women leaders encouraging peace and social cohesion.

REHABILITATED WATER SOURCES REDUCE TENSIONS

The degradation of the security situation in one commune in 2020 forced many people to flee their villages. These IDPs' arrival increased the demand for water resources, leading to conflicts around existing water sources used for human consumption and livestock. To reduce the growing sense of community frustration toward the State for not resolving the issue, BFRP worked to rehabilitate five hand-powered water pumps benefiting more than 10,000 IDPs and host populations. This activity reduced tensions by shortening wait times for populations to access and retrieve water. Reducing waiting times has allowed women, who are typically responsible for getting water for their household, more time to conduct income-generating activities. The program also provided training to local water point management committees on sustainable water management and countering violent extremism.

SECTION 4

MONITORING AND EVALUATION, LEARNING, RESEARCH, AND REPORTING

During the current reporting period, BFRP's monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) team supported the GMUs to draft and review concept notes; developed and implemented monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans on an activity-by-activity basis; collected, reviewed, and finalized data for activity final evaluation reports (FERs); completed cluster evaluations and a case study reflection; and facilitated lessons learned and deep dive sessions for all BFRP staff and OTI.

Given limited access for BFRP staff to directly visit programming locations due to security challenges, the MEL team continued to use a "hotline" mechanism in partnership with a local subcontractor to collect activity level data. BFRP engaged the hotline to interview a total of 2,798 activity beneficiaries during this period. The data collected through the hotline complemented information collected from grantees, field program assistants (FPAs) and direct phone interviews by the MEL team.

In addition to routine FER reviews with lessons learned sessions each week with the BFRP team and OTI, the MEL team conducted an in-depth case study on IGAs in the Sahel and Nord regions for program learning. The objective of this case study was to understand the link between the type of IGA and the ultimate impact on beneficiaries. The case study presented key insights, conclusions, and recommendations for future programming derived from an analysis of seven activities implemented under BFRP Cluster 2, Mitigate Livelihood Disruption and Foster Adaptive Economic Opportunities, between August 2019 and September 2020. With a focus on how IGAs benefited women in the Sahel and Nord regions, the case study sought to help the BFRP team to better understand how, why, and under what circumstances the IGAs led to change amongst women, and how they contributed to mitigating the destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity. For example, as a result of BFRP activities supporting IGAs for women, BFRP found that the women beneficiaries who formed networks and continued to meet after activity close were able to improve their IGAs. These female-led business platforms facilitated the exchange of information on supply and demand, sharing lessons learned and best practices as entrepreneurs, and even the exchange of goods to help fellow entrepreneurs meet their needs. In one commune, the women are in the process of formalizing their platforms by registering with the government. BFRP has since included this important step to formalize networks of IGA beneficiaries in new programming, for example proposing to form a network of beneficiaries who will go on to implement IGAs at the rehabilitated center.

During this reporting period, the MEL team conducted a cluster evaluation for program clusters 1, 2 and 4. The MEL team selected BFRP target communes in the Nord region and in the Sahel

region for the evaluation given the critical mass of programming available for review. BFRP did not include the Est region as not enough activities had been closed to have meaningful data. Consequently, BFRP plans to conduct a cluster evaluation in the Est region during the next reporting period. In total, the MEL team analyzed 16 activities in the cluster evaluation, employing a qualitative research approach consisting of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In total, BFRP conducted 76 KIIs and 25 FGDs between October 15 and November 17, 2020, and finalized the cluster evaluation report on January 8, 2021. To incorporate program learnings into BFRP's feedback loop, the MEL team presented all key findings, challenges and lessons learned from both the IGA case study and the cluster evaluation during the SRS held on February 2-4, 2021.

The findings of the cluster evaluation validated the three programmatic objectives and associated theories of change, providing evidence for continued programming in support of strengthening local leaders to act and react to community violence and instability, promoting appropriate economic alternatives to mitigate livelihoods disruptions, and supporting local essential service delivery. Key findings from the evaluation lent further credibility to programming approaches, like sequencing and layering. For instance, many entrepreneurs cited the lack of proper state-issued identity documents as a reason why their businesses were struggling, since they had limited ability to move around their community to sell their products or set up accounts for mobile banking. As a result, it is important to consider the prevalence of ID cards among beneficiaries prior to launching IGA programming, and to consider sequencing IGA programming after an ID card campaign. In this way, clusters 2 and 4 are mutually reinforcing, and proper sequencing can amplify impact. BFRP implemented this key finding during the reporting period, completing an ID card campaign in Ouahigouya.

KEY RESULTS BY PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Over this reporting period, in addition to the cluster evaluation and the case study on IGAs, the MEL team collected and analyzed data for 56 completed and closed activities including 15 in the Nord, 12 in the Sahel, 27 in the Est, and two in Ouagadougou implemented in collaboration with 49 different grantees. These activities targeted approximately 99,197 beneficiaries including 36,894 women and girls across the target regions.

The following are examples of significant outcomes related to the problem sets from various final evaluation reports, cluster evaluations, the IGA case study, community feedback, and observations from the reporting period.

EMPOWER COMMUNITY LEADERS

Leaders initiate actions for community stability

More than 1,190 local leaders including 688 women across the program's target regions benefited from capacity building and networking initiatives through partners and experts, which equipped them with new methods for deeper engagement on CVE issues. BFRP programming targeting local leaders this period resulted in new methods for engagement on CVE issues. Interviews with community members following BFRP programming have shown that leaders are more engaged on CVE issues and have increased their efforts to communicate and collaborate with community members. These changes in the behavior of community leaders

demonstrate their increased sense of responsibility to their communities to seek stability.

In the Est region, to address the lack of adequate response from local leaders to counter the elevated threat risk of terrorist group exploitation of community tensions, 120 community leaders benefited from trainings on CVE and their roles and responsibilities in promoting peace and social stability. As a result, the leaders developed clear, context-driven plans to address grievances often exploited by VEOs for recruitment and generate support within their communities. The leaders then implemented several concrete actions with community members, such as awareness raising campaigns on mutual acceptance and social cohesion.

BFRP supported youth leader ambassadors, to promote peaceful presidential and legislative elections in November 2020. BFRP trained 113 local leaders, including 46 women, and provided in-kind support to hold 473 educational talks with community members on the elections process and socio-political tolerance, mobilizing 4,326 direct participants in the four communes. Thanks in part to these efforts by women and youth leaders, which also included 309 radio broadcasts by local leaders encouraging peaceful elections, no incidents of violence were recorded during the electoral process in any of the four target communes despite continued threats by VEOs and recent histories of elections related violence in 2016.

In the Sahel region, BFRP observed that poor communication between state actors and communities tends to exacerbate tensions and deepen grievances that erode local governance and can be exploited by VEOs. For example, in the Sahel region, the increased presence of security forces has led to more frequent interactions with local populations that can quickly escalate in the complex security environment, generating frictions and creating opportunities for miscommunication. To respond to this problem set, BFRP engaged a local professional translation and interpretation firm to train 300 volunteer interpreters from eight communes in the Sahel region in practical interpretation and to develop a glossary of key terms and translations for the local context. These interpreters, who play a key role in reassuring community members during their interactions with state actors, have facilitated measurable increases in local populations' use of public services as they developed trust in the interpreters. In addition to their traditional role, volunteer interpreters also coached community members in methods and behaviors they could adopt to improve interactions with state actors, paving the way for more peaceful outcomes and stronger links with public institutions and services.

In the Nord region, in response to the destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity, BFRP supported 130 local leaders to hold dialogue sessions discussing potential initiatives and actions for peaceful coexistence and positive interaction among community members. After the series of meetings, the local leaders then identified and implemented initiatives in each of their communities, including organizing public fora and additional meetings of leaders to promote peace, social cohesion, and mutual acceptance. This demonstrates an important shift in local leaders' attitudes and tangible examples of local leader engagement vis-a-vis community challenges. In Ouahigouya, leaders of youth organizations held awareness-raising campaigns on youth engagement against the destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity faced by communities. These campaigns aimed to inform and encourage local youth to adopt behaviors of tolerance and mutual acceptance, and to stimulate individual social cohesion initiatives among youth.

According to the cluster evaluation report conducted in October-December 2020, men, women and youth reported that as a result of BFRP interventions, community leaders have become more engaged in questions about insecurity and violence. Further, with knowledge gained through BFRP interventions, these leaders feel more secure and less scared than they did previously.

Connect and build networks

Local leader beneficiaries continued to create new and reinforce existing networks to address the need for stronger ties and bonds to counter the effects of violence and insecurity. Over the reporting period with support from BFRP, local leaders from target communes in the Nord region set up consultative platforms for connecting and building networks of local leaders. These networks serve as discussion spaces for leaders to meet regularly, confer about various challenges facing their communities, and identify potential actions to initiate proactively or in response to these challenges. Beneficiaries identified several initiatives, including some that may lead to future BFRP activities, and others that leaders will be able to implement without external support. These initiatives include meetings between community leaders on the promotion of peace and social cohesion, exchanges between community leaders on the promotion of peace, a communal forum on peace and social cohesion, and the organization of a meeting between community leaders on the promotion of peace and social cohesion. In one commune, a roadmap was established to be used to organize activities to increase and improve social interaction between groups. Activities in the roadmap included a football match between IDPs and host community members; a solidarity day to mobilize resources to improve living conditions for the population; a clean-up day at a health center that brought together nurses and community members to work together towards a common goal; an exchange meeting with middle school and high school students on traditional values and social cohesion; courtesy and advocacy visits among religious and customary leaders to discuss community life; and a public conference on social cohesion where leaders shared their experiences and their knowledge on non-violent communication and the difficulties encountered in managing insecurity.

MITIGATE LIVELIHOOD DISRUPTION AND FOSTER ADAPTIVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Increased income and employment for vulnerable youth and women

Over the reporting period, BFRP continued to support communities in identifying alternative economic opportunities and increasing their skills and knowledge on adapted IGAs. This support has been strategically coupled with provision of start-up kits/equipment to enable beneficiaries to apply the knowledge acquired in starting up their own business.

In the Sahel region, 30 vulnerable women were trained in entrepreneurship skills, enabling them to secure viable sources of income through economic activities adapted for the context. In one commune, as alternatives to economic activities disrupted by violence and instability, the participants identified IGA opportunities in hairstyling, sewing, food service, weaving and dyeing, and soap making. Beneficiaries were provided a business startup kit enabling them to initiate and run their activities immediately following the training, with 25 of the 30 women reporting increased income. For instance, a beneficiary running a food service business using equipment

provided under this activity, reported an increase of 5,000 FCFA per bag of rice per month on her average income.

"Since the meat market was rehabilitated and equipped with a freezer, I manage to store the unsold meat properly and this allows me to increase my income by more than 5,000 FCFA per day. Before, I could have around 7,000 FCFA of profit per day, and now thanks to the capacity of conservation I find myself very often with 12,000 FCFA of profit per day."

— PROGRAM BENEFICIARY

In one commune, BFRP piloted innovative economic activities by supporting butchers to rehabilitate and equip the commune's meat market and provide capacity building on improved butchery techniques. As a result, members of the cooperative indicated that the rehabilitation has improved the image of the butchery in terms of meeting hygiene and sanitation standards, attracting new customers who used to buy their meat in Dori or Ouagadougou. With this growing consumer demand, the butchers reported a significant increase in their daily income.

Also, in another commune, in order to respond to the sentiment of frustration and hopelessness felt by youth due to a lack of economic alternatives, BFRP supported the rehabilitation and equipment of a vocational training

and non-formal education center to provide training and ensure employment opportunities for youth vulnerable to economic incentives offered by VEOs. A total of 45 youth were trained in professional skills such as welding, motorcycle mechanics, cutting/sewing, and carpentry. Over the reporting period, 37 youth were able to open their own workshops and now are running businesses in their respective trades.

Identify adapted economic solutions

To address the lack of viable economic opportunities due to insecurity in the Nord region, BFRP trained 100 youth from several communes in techniques for identifying job opportunities and developing IGAs that are adapted to the insecure context. Youth participants proposed IGAs for tent rental, soap making, digital kiosk management, hair styling, and processing of local products, and received equipment in-kind through the activity to start up their businesses. Within four months of the activity's end, half of the post-activity survey respondents were able to overcome the many obstacles facing youth entrepreneurs and successfully launch their IGAs, with four out of every five respondents reporting increases to their profits. At the same time, BFRP gained important lessons learned for future IGA programming. For example, training in the specific skills required to use and maintain the equipment for certain business types, such as soap making, hair styling, and transformation of local products, is essential for the success of these IGAs, beyond general entrepreneurial training.

The case study conducted in the Nord and Sahel regions identified emerging market opportunities from the increasing presence of public and humanitarian services in their localities. With support from BFRP, some beneficiaries conducted informal market assessments and adjusted the focus of their IGAs from their original choice (e.g., food production or selling clothes) to a more competitive alternative such as selling household or electrical equipment. This pivot allowed them to stay competitive in the market, take advantage of emerging

opportunities, and contributed toward mitigating livelihood disruption in an increasingly unstable area. For example, in the Nord region, 14 women who were engaged in IGAs selling clothes pivoted their business focus after conducting an informal market assessment. With the support of BFRP, they received training on manufacturing accessories such as shoes and handbags instead. In another example, four women reported pivoting away from their existing livelihood business of selling gas bottles to selling mats (both locally made and imported varieties) and vegetable oil instead. This was a welcome change because, as the women reported, the gas bottles were hard to find and also were sought after by VEOs, either for normal use (cooking) or for fabricating IEDs.

In the Est region, BFRP partnered with a local youth-led grantee to conduct a market survey designed to identify resilient or "positive deviant" merchants and other economic operators who have adapted and/or continued to operate in precarious security contexts. The best practices and lessons learned gathered during the survey were then shared with 57 entrepreneurs from the province during a two-day workshop, which included modules on CVE. Following the workshop, more than half of the local entrepreneur participants reported being able to successfully adapt their businesses to be resilient to terrorist threats and instability thanks to the best practices highlighted in the training, the module on CVE awareness, and encouragement from local leaders to persevere in their IGAs.

"Before this workshop, I was considering giving up and selling my livestock because it was difficult to get feed for them. The workshop has allowed me to find ways to continue my activity. Indeed, I bought the feed, I stored it, and I continue to raise my cattle."
— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

In one commune, BFRP trained 120 women on traditional poultry farming, which the community identified as an adapted economic opportunity in spite of the worsening security context and influx of IDPs. In addition to the practical and theoretical training in poultry IGAs, the program provided a start-up kit to each participant including a mobile henhouse, one blue rooster, 10 hens, a traditional chicken feeder/drinker, and 100 kg of chicken feed. The training also included modules on CVE, giving the women additional perspectives for adapting their IGAs to the local context. All 58 beneficiaries interviewed following the activity reported having been able to more effectively and efficiently manage their work and expand their businesses as a result of BFRP support.

To address the economic vulnerability of youth, BFRP supported the training of 50 youth, including 11 women, on vocational skills including motorbike repair, solar power electrical services, and sewing. The beneficiaries were provided with start-up kits which enabled around 30 percent of beneficiaries to immediately start and run their businesses during the activity evaluation period. Other beneficiaries opted to continue pursuing training and practical apprenticeships in their new industries, given that the skills required to launch their businesses are gained over time.

According to the cluster evaluation conducted between October and December 2020, all IGA beneficiaries interviewed in the Sahel and Nord regions spoke highly of the trainings they received, which included skills training on specific IGAs they identified, as well as training on how to identify alternative economic opportunities. Women also created grassroots savings associations using proceeds from their IGAs. These associations serve as an important safety net and contribute toward mitigating future livelihood disruptions.

Overall, analysis has found that beneficiaries are able to meet their basic needs such as providing food and school fees for their children and covering other household expenses. However, the sustainability of these economic opportunities and maintaining increased income levels requires more capacity building on small locally adapted businesses and financial management.

REVITALIZE TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY MECHANISMS

Over this reporting period, BFRP continued to support existing mechanisms to promote positive interactions within and between communities to reduce tensions. In the Est region, BFRP supported the facilitation of intergenerational dialogues between elders and youth in a series of three activities. More than 700 men and women, ranging from youth to older adults, came together for the series of community dialogues. Social divides between young and old are often exploited by VEOs to recruit within their communities. The dialogues provided an opportunity to analyze existing intergenerational gaps and propose actionable solutions. Each dialogue was structured around social issues sourced from the community members, including the abduction of young girls for traditional marriages, land tenure challenges, and water access, with intergenerational unity as a cross-cutting theme. Participants then developed joint actions for each issue to collaboratively reinforce intergenerational links for the betterment of their communities. In one commune, for example, participants drafted and adopted community protocols for water source management, advocacy for the opening of roads to access certain water points during the rainy season, and awareness raising on hygiene around water.

In the Nord region, BFRP implemented an activity to generate active discussions between youths and local leaders on social issues like stigmatization, exclusion, fear, and radicalization. With BFRP support, 89 youth from these communes participated in the information exchanges

“Thanks to the income of my activity, I manage to pay for the clothing of my children, I weave fabrics for myself, and I can sew additional clothes that I can sell. Before the training I did not make any money. Now, I can design and sell 3 fabrics per week at the rate of 8,000 FCFA or 15,000 FCFA per fabric depending on the model, making a weekly income of between 24,000 FCFA and 45,000 FCFA...”

— BENEFICIARY TRAINED IN WEAVING

and were inspired to become active contributors in the resilience of their communities through small-scale initiatives. For example, following the discussions, participants of one commune went on to organize a soccer match, to host a community meal, and to advocate for a progressive reopening plan for schools that had been shuttered due to insecurity. School reopening also serves as a pull factor away from terrorist group influence since many youths had left the schools when they closed to go work in artisanal mining sites, which are often targeted by VEOs.

ENABLE CRITICAL LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Over this reporting period, BFRP worked with local governments at the municipal and regional levels to improve delivery of essential public services as a means to counter perceptions of marginalization, reinforce state presence in areas with encroaching terrorist group influence, and release pressure on host communities looking out for their own needs as well as those of IDPs. Local authorities of the program's target localities have improved their understanding of community needs and increased their engagement to respond to those needs. More than 66,600 community members, including 32,344 women, benefited from BFRP critical service delivery activities across the program's target zones. In particular, BFRP activities this period provided national ID cards and birth certificates, supplied furniture and equipment to schools to accommodate internally displaced students and teachers, expanded access to basic emergency health services, addressed local land tenure issues, and rehabilitated 25 public water sources.

BFRP continues to partner with mayor's offices and regional branches of the National Identification Office to organize ID card and birth certificate campaigns. These activities are effective at improving interactions between local governments and their constituents and in facilitating individual freedom of movement. The ability to prove one's identity not only expands access to other public services, new markets for securing livelihoods, and facilitates passage through checkpoints; proof of identity also creates a sense of pride and confidence for its holder. During this period, BFRP completed one activity in the Est region producing 8,000 ID cards and 3,000 birth certificates, of whom there were 3,824 women beneficiaries and 1,360 IDP beneficiaries. In the Nord region, BFRP provided a total of 9,625 individuals with ID cards and 2,000 birth certificates. Of the beneficiaries, 6,178 were women, given the campaign's focus on IDPs and vulnerable host populations. To date, BFRP's grant activities with mayor's offices have provided more than 80,000 civil records to populations in the Sahel, Nord, and Est regions.

During the reporting period, BFRP responded to the increased pressure on schools due to growing displacement by providing assistance to regional governments to better serve host and displaced students in the Est and Nord regions. BFRP improved access to education for over 5,000 displaced students, including 2,300 girls, as well as host students, at 50 schools. This assistance, consisting of the provision of over 4,600 pieces of furniture, including student and teacher desks, chairs, and benches, improved the learning environment for displaced and host students alike and reduced displaced populations' feelings of abandonment. Additionally, parents' associations, school administration boards, and students were sensitized on social cohesion, proper management of the equipment, and advocacy for greater acceptance of IDPs.

Following these activities, beneficiaries reported a decrease in tensions among students, improved mutual acceptance between host and displaced students at the beneficiary schools, an improved quality in service by the school administrations, a more stable rate of student retention in school, and a sentiment that local authorities are more attentive and responsive to critical needs of the communities.

Attacks and threats against health workers in the Est, Nord, and Sahel regions have caused several remote health centers to close and health workers to relocate to urban centers. With fewer health workers available, communities lack medical and psychological assistance needed to recover from violence. In response to the widespread closure of community health centers, BFRP supported local efforts to increase access to primary health care and emergency response in affected regions by training 378 community-based health workers (CBHWs) and volunteers, including 106 women, in emergency first aid.

The first aid training focused on simulations, role play activities, and case studies to ensure participants could respond appropriately depending on the emergency situation. Additionally, first aid specialists covered topics such as care for wounds and injuries that might result from a terrorist attack. BFRP also procured approximately 600 first aid kits—one for every training participant, plus backup kits stocked with local organizations—to extend access to emergency medical assistance. Stakeholders, including representatives from the regional health department, appreciated the procurement of the first aid kits. The kits were an essential element of the activities’ successes because they ensured that first responders would be able to efficiently and effectively apply their training and support their communities into the future. One CBHW told BFRP, “Since I received my first aid kit, I have rescued three people with emergency health conditions.” More than 80 percent of CBHW’s trained in the Est region activity reported having responded to emergency incidents in their communities since they received training and first aid kits from BFRP, and that they were able to provide adequate first aid to victims of these incidents.

In the Est Region, BFRP supported an information and awareness tour in response to tensions resulting from a misunderstanding over land. This initiative connected local populations to authorities and mitigated tensions within and between communities, especially with the increasing number of IDPs. This tour enabled the High Commissioner to inform and raise awareness on land conflict management. Additionally, it provided an interactive space between state actors and community members of the three communes to improve their understanding of land issues and discuss their frustrations over land management.

In the overlapping contexts of climate change, conflict, and population growth, clean water is an increasingly scarce public resource in Burkina Faso. Water pumps no longer delivered water due to disrepair and there were growing tensions and strain on the limited working pumps due to additional demand from displaced populations. Constituents living in many BFRP target communities elevated these concerns to local officials and BFRP supported this critical service delivery. In this reporting period, BFRP awarded in-kind grants in the Est and Nord

“Now I can have clean water without fighting for it.”
— RESIDENT OF NORD REGION

regions to rehabilitate a total of 23 water pumps and two large-diameter wells.

LESSONS LEARNED

Over the reporting period, BFRP programming resulted in important lessons learned as outlined below:

- **Community leaders' engagement and initiatives have resulted in positive developments in security and peace in communities.** Women and youth community members feel more secure in their communities as a result of the leaders' training and programs that promote peace. As a result of awareness-building activities between groups, ethnic and religious disputes and violence have decreased. Leaders have promoted collaboration and social cohesion much more actively than they did previously. Leaders are more engaged in efforts and initiatives to build awareness, increase security, and improve social cohesion to support their communities, which contributes to greater willingness of people to stay in the community. Collaboration between IDPs and community members has improved as a result of community leaders' training and initiatives. Despite these positive developments, some community leaders note that insecurity still exists, which limits their capacity for success.
- **As a result of community leaders' actions/initiatives, communities have experienced positive developments in women and youth social inclusion.** Direct beneficiaries of the program and many community members observed that leaders are including women much more than before, which has led to a more inclusive community. Further, community leaders' increased engagement with youth has led to youth's increased investment in their communities. Regardless, a gap remains in the social inclusion of women as compared to men.
- **Providing relevant equipment, informed by a needs and market assessment as part of IGA design, allows beneficiaries to practically leverage skills gained in their small businesses or IGAs.** In contexts where communities have lost almost all their livelihoods due to violence and insecurity, it is critical to combine IGA training with material support, including access to raw materials. Equipment enables beneficiaries, especially women, to effectively run their businesses and meet basic family needs post activity completion. Additionally, a rigorous needs and market assessment is an important element of the development phase of the IGA to ensure that the equipment/kits provided to beneficiaries can be found and/or repaired locally, and therefore reduce the possibility of delays to beneficiaries' IGAs due to equipment breakdown or lack of supplies.
- **Connecting local government and local authorities to women strengthens their role in communities.** Establishing a connection between the state and communities enables state institutions to understand and take into account the basic needs of communities, especially women, in their local policies. This further amplifies the voice of women and strengthens their role in stabilizing their communities.

- **Local authorities' response to community basic needs in an insecure environment is contingent on their understanding of violent extremism; the level of awareness of their roles and responsibilities in such a challenging environment; and their capacity to identify key needs of the population and to take action.** Roundtables and discussions with local leaders are enhanced through training on violent extremism and explaining the role local leaders can play to address these threats. BFRP support has created spaces to bring together local state actors and provided local authorities with tools. As a result, these local leaders are better equipped and feel more empowered to respond to the destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity.
- **Communities are more likely to withstand and address the destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity when local authorities demonstrate greater presence and control through key service delivery and their engagement in social cohesion initiatives.** Besides support for key service delivery, BFRP programming fostered spaces for positive interactions between authorities (including defense and security forces) and local populations and delivered key services such as access to education and water. As a result, target communities regained and improved trust in each other and in local authorities.

SECTION 5

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

During this reporting period the BFRP team worked on a plan for a phase out schedule of four GMUs in light of the contract end date of February 2022. On December 4, 2020, the BFRP SMT presented to all staff the calendar of rolling office closures for the BFRP program, as well as the anticipated level of TAP funding for each GMU to program through closeout. The program will implement a phased closeout, with each of the four offices closing sequentially over a six-month period beginning August 2021. This will allow for remaining TAP funds to be distributed across the three program offices in accordance with regional programmatic priorities, and to facilitate smooth operational closeout and management, as opposed to all four offices closing at once, a key lesson learned applied from other OTI project closeouts. The Ouahigouya office will close first on August 31, 2021, followed by the Dori office on October 31, 2021, next the Fada office will close December 31, 2021, and finally the Ouagadougou office by January 15, 2022.

BFRP submitted the Close-Out Plan deliverable to OTI on April 2, 2021 and proposed a draft Communication and Close-out Workshop Plan for each of the field offices, to be implemented with key partners in the upcoming reporting period.

FINANCE

During the reporting period, the BFRP in-country finance team disbursed \$2,121,238 in activity programming. This is a considerable increase from the previous period total of \$1,903,765 in disbursements. There were some delays in invoicing in January 2021 as Chemonics put in place an upgrade in the financial reporting software to more seamlessly integrate with the new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. All invoicing was caught up in the month of February 2021.

During this same period BFRP submitted a formal request to the Government of Burkina Faso for the reimbursement of value-added tax (VAT) incurred during a provisional registration period earlier in the project. BFRP may be reimbursed but the most likely outcome is a VAT credit from the tax authority as provided to other USAID implementing partners who have submitted similar requests. BFRP was required to pay an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) tax for certain communications equipment procured through the OUA019 activity. This equipment is not covered under the existing bilateral agreement between the United States and Burkina Faso. BFRP was able to get a mobile money payment system up and running after replacing the modem to a Section 889 compliant brand with respect to August 2020 revisions to the ADS 302 and Section 889 of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), prohibiting use or procurement of telecommunication equipment from a list of restricted providers. Using this improved mobile money payment system, BFRP is now processing beneficiary payments such as transportation and meal stipends directly to beneficiaries through electronic transfers.

**EXHIBIT 6. NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY REGION IN THE REPORTING PERIOD
WITH ESTIMATED AWARD VALUE**

REGION	CLEARED	VALUE	COMPLETED	VALUE	CLOSED	VALUE	TOTAL ⁵	TOTAL VALUE
National	23	\$70,429	2	\$268,016	4	\$148,294	5	\$502,180
Est	16	\$910,076	27	\$1,145,296	17	\$855,649	33	\$1,813,418
Nord	13	\$691,796	16	\$781,402	11	\$389,452	23	\$1,256,182
Sahel	4	\$504,259	13	\$1,420,088	12	\$1,405,202	17	\$1,924,347
Total	35	\$2,176,560	58	\$3,614,802	44	\$2,798,596	78	\$5,496,128

⁵This total reflects the number of discrete activities who were actively under implementation during the reporting period, meaning that their start dates were prior to March 31, 2021 and their end dates were after October 1, 2020.

COMMUNICATIONS

As mentioned in the preceding section, the mobile money contract was initially canceled due to Section 889 restrictions but was reinstated once the company informed the project that compliant equipment could be used to replace the modem to log into the system. This allowed the use of mobile money transfers as originally planned. The project had to recall a number of modems from the regional offices because they are manufactured by the companies listed in the Section 889 list of restricted communication providers. This made communication more challenging as the internet connections in some offices are still problematic. Some staff members must rely on mobile hotspots on their phones to communicate in meetings due to weak internet bandwidth.

STAFFING

BFRP continued to manage logistically in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic with a two-week office rotation schedule whereby BFRP offices were at approximately half capacity, and no more than one person was permitted to work in an individual office at a time. A pause to this rotation schedule was put in place in late December 2020 into January 2021 while new cases were on the rise across Burkina Faso, and staff were asked to completely work from home for several weeks over the holiday period. The rotating schedule resumed in mid-January through the end of the reporting period.

As of March 31, 2021, BFRP has 49 long-term local staff members; four long-term TCNs – one working as monitoring, evaluation, and learning specialist, and three program managers; and four USN expatriate staff – two senior grants and subcontracts managers (SGSM), one deputy chief of party (DCOP), and one chief of party. BFRP now employs FPAs across the Nord region, the Sahel region, the Est region, and the Centre-Est regions.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER USAID PROGRAMS

BFRP is part of the Sahel Collaboration and Communication (SCC) platform which promotes collaboration, learning and adaptation among USAID implementing partners, communities participating in various USAID activities, target government institutions and research institutions to support improved impact.

As BFRP is approaching close out, discussions are being carried out with SCC to identify relevant partners to the program’s objectives in target communes with whom to collaborate and ensure a sustainable legacy.

The new Mercy Corps Bridge Youth Connect Programme contacted BFRP to touch base on youth focused programming that had been carried out to date. BFRP shared the cluster evaluation conducted in October-November 2020 for the Sahel and Nord regions and a list of BFRP youth-focused activities with the Mercy Corps program manager.

BFRP also met with the International Republican Institute's (IRI) country representative to discuss activities aimed at combating extremism. IRI is working at a much higher level in the policy arena but BFRP shared the names of several partners who are part of larger national networks especially in civil society who are working on stability and may also be working on policy initiatives of interest to IRI.

BFRP continues to participate in the USAID Democracy & Governance (DG) partner meetings held every two weeks and shares ongoing activities and analyses with the group. The cluster evaluation findings for the Nord and Sahel regions were shared with the DG group, and once the evaluation is completed for the Est region, it also will be shared.

During the reporting period, Chemonics was awarded the USAID Global Reconciliation Fund OEE cooperative agreement, which works to increase interdependence and resilience between farmers and herders in Burkina Faso through people-to-people programming. BFRP continues to share lessons learned with OEE and coordinate to maximize synergies and layer activities as possible.

SECTION 6

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

BFRP continued to rely on adaptive programming principles to deliver fast and flexible activities while continuously learning from implementation challenges. During this period, BFRP throttled up programming levels to new highs thanks to increased staffing and significant enhancements to the activity cycle from the prior period. Linked to the surge in activities under implementation, especially in the first half of the reporting period, BFRP completed a high number of activities that had been previously suspended due to COVID-19 disruptions, requiring GMUs to adapt activities to be compliant with new operational limitations and resume meaningful implementation with partners after several months' delay during activity suspensions. A number of staffing changes – at all levels – also challenged resources and impacted staff morale, linked also to proactive but difficult discussions around program closeout. As such, the project took decisive steps to position the program for an impactful, strategically aligned, and well-organized closeout phase in preparation for the final year of implementation.

OPERATIONS CHALLENGES

Staffing Challenges. In December 2020 with the announcement of initial closeout planning, BFRP restructured the Fada office to align staffing with the five target communities retained for the final year of programming. While staff whose positions were eliminated were either absorbed by other BFRP teams, other Chemonics projects, or departed for external opportunities, the rapid reduction in Fada staffing resulted in remaining staff members bearing the load for two GMUs' worth of activities completed during the surge in programming at the start of the period. This was further compounded by holiday and leave planning and downtime on the Chemonics financial systems during ERP rollout. A temporary pause on concept development was put in place in March 2021 to allow the Fada team to devote more effort to closing their portfolio of completed activities before resuming new concept development, planned for April 2021.

In December 2020, SMT also announced that the OTI Country Representative (CR) would be leaving the program in February 2021. Following his departure, remote and in-person coverage for the position has been provided by OTI. In March 2021, the Operations Manager (OM) announced his expedited departure from the program to start up the new OTI program in the West African Littoral countries. Within two weeks of this announcement, Chemonics completed a recruit for the long-term position and presented a qualified candidate to OTI for key personnel approval, available to mobilize immediately in the next period to support the project through closeout. In the meantime, coverage is being provided by a combination of efforts across the Leadership Team personnel and the home office-based Project Management Unit (PMU).

PROGRAMMING CHALLENGES

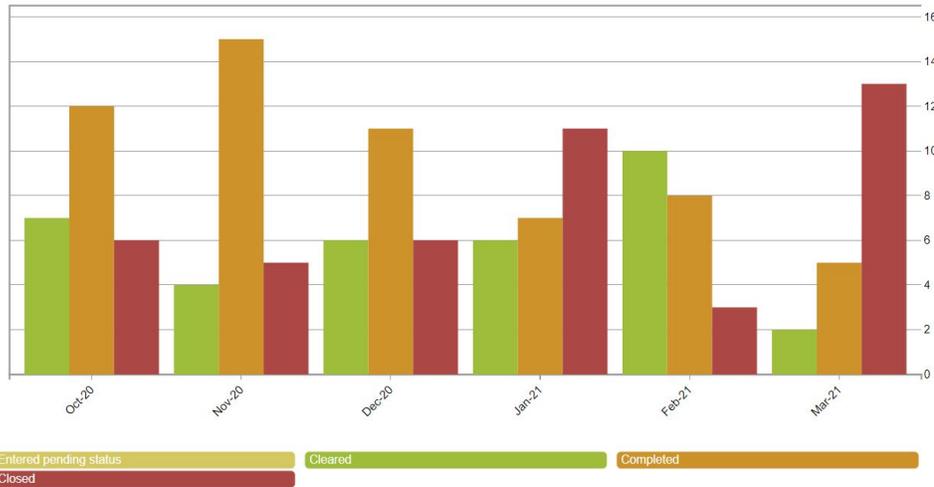
Adjustments to Concept Development Due to Resource Availability. During this period, BFRP had to

carefully balance programming objectives against the limited funding and time remaining for implementation. As a result, some previously identified activities were reduced in scope or budget or cancelled entirely. The activities most impacted were large infrastructure rehabilitations, as these interventions tend to have larger budgets and longer periods of development and implementation. For example, a rehabilitation of public buildings in Dori was rejected after having initially received a yellow light in October 2020 due the prioritization of other activities with greater beneficiary impact. The scopes of two activities planning infrastructure interventions were reduced in order to reallocate funds into other initiatives in the Sahel region. The same was done for large infrastructure activities at the concept development stage in the Nord region. In the Est region, the rehabilitation scope an activity also was reduced, though may be expanded back to its original scope during the following period.

Regardless of budget value or scope, all new concepts under development during the latter half of the reporting period and in the upcoming period require additional scrutiny and thought to ensure that implementation and closeout will be feasibly completed prior to office closure. The Ouahigouya GMU in particular, being the first office to close in August 2021, has needed to prioritize new concept development and green-light submissions during the first quarter of 2021 in order to allow for full activity implementation and completion before the Ouahigouya office closure. As a result, the Ouahigouya GMU has had less bandwidth to focus on closing out a backlog of completed activities, as is discussed in further detail in the following section.

Completed Activity Backlog. BFRP experienced a backlog of activities in Completed status, beginning in late 2020 and continuing through March 2021. As shown in Exhibit 7, BFRP completed 12 activities in October 2020, 15 activities in November 2020, and 11 activities in December 2020. The build-up of activities at this stage of the activity cycle was due to numerous factors. During the previous reporting period, BFRP restarted many activities that had been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic after undergoing certain modifications and putting in place restrictions on large gatherings. While BFRP staggered the restart dates for these activities to manage workload of GMUs and grantees, each activity had been partially implemented up to different steps in implementation plans. Given that August and December are months when grantees and beneficiaries have limited availability due to locally observed holiday periods, most of these activities came to an end between the end of October and mid-December. This created bottlenecks in the closeout process, particularly in finance and MEL, due to the large number of FERs to be drafted and subsequently reviewed and approved, and the volume of financial closeouts to manage.

EXHIBIT 7. NUMBER OF GRANTS CLEARED, COMPLETED, AND CLOSED PER MONTH



Since the departure of the Ouahigouya MEL-A in September 2020, the MEL team had been working to cover the position internally until a permanent solution was put in place. The staff reduction in Fada in January 2021 allowed for the transition of the Fada Ouest MEL-A to the Ouahigouya office full-time, bringing the MEL team back to normal coverage. However, the three-month period without a full-time MEL-A in Ouahigouya contributed to delays in FER submissions across all three GMUs.

Lastly, in January 2021 Chemonics headquarters launched an ERP system to modernize and integrate Chemonics business systems, including Chemonics' legacy accounting system used in project offices worldwide. During this system upgrade, BFRP was able to continue financial operations, such as making and receiving payments. However, financial reporting, including disbursements and the monthly invoice, was delayed as the accounting system was upgraded.

The combination of factors cited above have contributed to a higher-than-average volume of outstanding closeouts across GMUs; however, significant progress has been made since January 2021 to reduce the number of completed activities and move them along the activity cycle to Closed status. BFRP will continue to place emphasis on timely closeouts in the subsequent reporting periods.

CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

Implementing around localized security threats. As stated previously, the prevailing security context in Burkina Faso has featured a relative lull in terrorist incidents and civilian fatalities.

Nonetheless, as stated elsewhere, VEOs continued attacking VDPs, using IEDs, kidnapping, and conducting targeted assassinations of civilians. As a result, BFRP continued to confront challenges accessing programming communes in all three geographic zones of intervention. To overcome this challenge, BFRP both proactively and reactively designed implementation plans and activity budgets to carry out critical in-person activity steps in urban centers offering enhanced security, in the case of bringing activity participants to Ouahigouya, to Dori, or to Ouagadougou.

Another key adaptive strategy is shifting to remote supervision, as in the case of communes made inaccessible due to armed groups. For activity monitoring and evaluation, BFRP also relies on FPAs for facilitating local payments when mobile money or direct banking is not possible, for the review and receipt of grantee deliverables, to verify delivery of goods and services, and other key implementation tasks when BFRP staff are unable to make activity monitoring trips. While no activities were suspended or canceled this period due to security challenges, a small number of activities did experience delays related to local insecurity, in particular when essential implementation steps requiring travel must be postponed.

These security factors sometimes also opened windows of opportunity for BFRP intervention. For example, the Ouahigouya GMU responded to the ongoing IDP crisis by building upon past programming to strengthen service delivery and increase economic opportunities. This includes rehabilitating boreholes to increase access to potable water, supporting agricultural livelihoods, and installing solar-powered streetlamps to provide access to safe public spaces after dark. Similarly, the shifting security context has presented new geographic windows of opportunity, enabling BFRP to reenter zones that were previously inaccessible for security reasons. By closely following and responding to real-time changes in the regional security contexts, BFRP was able to rapidly intervene in windows of opportunity and widen its impact.

COVID-19 Pandemic. The global pandemic continued to impact and challenge BFRP programming and operations. As reported in the previous period, the Government of Burkina Faso restriction on gatherings of more than 50 people remained in place, and BFRP maintained a restriction on activity-related gatherings of no more than 25 people. All activities under implementation during this period included approved personal protective and hygienic materials – such as reusable cloth facemasks and soap-stocked handwashing stations – and infection mitigation measures such as social distancing are put in place to minimize exposure and risk to all BFRP partners and beneficiaries. No activities were suspended or canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic during this period.

At the start of the reporting period, all BFRP staff had returned to working full-time from the office. However, due to an increase in daily number of COVID-19 cases across Burkina Faso between November and December, BFRP staff were asked to return to fully remote work in December 2020. Offices were partially reopened in January 2021, following a two-week rotation at 50 percent capacity in the office, which was maintained through the end of the reporting period. Though BFRP has systems in place for management and communication in these circumstances, full and even partial remote work remains a challenge to staff communication and coordination among teams.

SECTION 7

NEXT STEPS AND PRIORITIES

The next reporting period will focus on the intentional and strategic application of the activity implementation and program closeout plans developed during the current period. BFRP will emphasize building upon the foundational roots established in target communities for final activities and will insist on excellence in the smooth running of operational systems and procedures refined over the life of the program. Project funding and timetables will be monitored closely by the SMT to ensure both the smooth continuity of the activity cycle and an efficient use of financial obligations to maximize incrementally accumulated gains in stability in target communes over the final year of the program.

The final activities for each GMU will be submitted for green light clearance no later than three months before each respective office closure. Therefore, as no new concept development or activity clearance will take place in the final months of each GMU, activity implementation will be front-loaded approximately three to six months before office closure to reduce administrative backlog in the final months of each GMU. Sequenced activities will reinforce community impacts, increasing the likelihood of a sustainable impact following the departure of BFRP. GMUs will attempt to ensure that communities and key local partners have the resources – skills, materials, or infrastructure – to continue to work toward BFRP’s strategic objectives with limited outside intervention or funding.

An important aspect of any program closeout is communication to all stakeholders – government officials, partner organizations, vendors, and beneficiaries – regarding the timing and reasoning for BFRP’s departure. As the faces and primary points of contact between the program and its target communities and populations, the GMUs will be responsible for the bulk of the external communication and messaging. During the next period, a communication and messaging strategy will be finalized and rolled out by each office on a staggered timeline, mirroring the office closeout plan. The content of the message will be closely coordinated with USAID and the US Embassy in collaboration with the OTI country team. The BFRP closeout communication strategy will provide standard language to be used for all BFRP staff as well as messaging tailored specifically to each region. In this manner, BFRP intends for there to be a smooth departure from each region and the country.

The continued support and intervention of USAID and other actors following the departure of BFRP will be key to sustaining progress in the Nord, Sahel, and Est regions toward stability. BFRP will coordinate with USAID, the US Embassy, and other actors including UN organizations to ensure others are best positioned to begin or continue engaging in programming in these regions. In case of a follow-on program, BFRP is committed to ensuring continuity of knowledge and resources.

Operationally, COVID-19 will continue to impact the project in the coming months. BFRP will continue monitoring and regularly reassessing safety and health conditions in Burkina Faso for new and ongoing programming in accordance with Government of Burkina Faso and United

States Centers for Disease Control recommendations and will adjust the program's response as needed.

As the program reaches closeout, staff attrition is expected as individuals look to secure long-term employment. The BFRP SMT will monitor staff resourcing closely and will make adjustments as needed to provide adequate coverage and minimize impact on programming and operations.

PROGRAMMING WITH INTENT

In the third and final year of programming, BFRP intends to build upon the progressive achievements in the stability of target communities and maximize impact in remaining windows of opportunity. To do so, BFRP will apply a wealth of programmatic and operational lessons gained from the previous two years of implementation.

Concept Development Strategy for the Final Year. Leading up to the February 2021 SRS, each GMU was asked to begin formulating a plan for utilization of remaining project funds allotted to their GMU. To help visualize and manage their concept development strategy through program closeout, tracking tools were developed that would allow the GMUs to calculate the amount of funds committed to date (green lit activities) and anticipated programming in terms of new concepts and pending activities, as well as the anticipated dates for key steps along the activity cycle. The SGSMs and PMs maintain this living document, which is shared with the SMT for discussion with OTI on a weekly basis. SMT provides feedback and guidance, which is provided to the GMUs. This feedback loop has allowed BFRP to strategically plan programming through office closure for all three GMUs, while creating a fast and reactive feedback loop for making adjustments as needed. This brainstorming prepared the GMUs to more thoroughly delve into this topic with inputs from the SMT and OTI during the February SRS.

February 2021 Strategic Review Session. During the February 2021 SRS, each GMU held working sessions to finess their strategy for the most effective and impactful application of funds during their respective office's remaining window for implementation. Each office was able to pitch concept ideas and receive feedback from the SMT, allowing them to develop a fleshed-out vision for use of their remaining allocated funds across their target communes. The Ouahigouya and Dori teams in particular, which have the least amount of time left before their office closures, needed to be strategic in not only what they would implement in the remaining months, but the order in which they would be implemented in order to ensure a manageable workload over the remaining months, with sufficient time at the end for activity closeout. Using feedback received from SMT, the GMUs have since been working to advance their SRS concepts through the activity cycle.

Benefits Achieved from Internal Process Improvements. During the previous reporting period, the leadership team restructured several internal procedures to increase efficiency and coordination across teams. During the current reporting period, these new procedures were applied and strengthened. One of the new systems put in place was the use of a mobile payment platform to make small electronic payments to beneficiaries, such as transportation and meal stipends, directly to each individual's mobile money account. Previously these types of participant stipends had to be distributed individually in-person to beneficiaries by a BFRP staff

member using cash. The roll-out of this electronic payment system has resulted in faster reception of funds by beneficiaries and has reduced the risk and administrative burden on the team associated with making cash payments.

Additionally, GMUs are now almost exclusively awarding hybrid fixed amount awards (FAA) grants with some in-kind components, meaning that fewer in-kind procurements are being managed by the BFRP team as higher-capacity grantees have been empowered to take over many smaller procurements themselves. This has relieved the GMUs of significant administrative and logistical burden associated with the high number of small transactions procurements that BFRP implemented under any fully in-kind grant, while empowering and building the capacity of high-performing grantees to manage their activities. Although nearly all BFRP grants now include a FAA cash component, BFRP still maintains responsibility and oversight for larger and more complex purchases, such as infrastructure works and high-value technical commodities, which are procured in-kind.

Capturing Lessons Learned from Key Activity Clusters. As noted in Section 4, BFRP has sought to capture and apply best practices in key areas of programming. A key example is BFRP's programming with the Government of Burkina Faso in producing identity documents for vulnerable populations. BFRP has been partnering with various entities of the Burkinabè government at the national and local levels, dating back to some of BFRP's earliest activities, to register populations in target communities and provide them with birth certificates and national identity cards. Based on feedback included in numerous FERs and the cluster evaluation conducted by the BFRP MEL team in 2020, BFRP has identified this as an effective means to support local authorities in providing crucial public services. As ONI is a national-level government agency central to the production and distribution of national identity cards, the SGSMs and DCOP developed a procedure guidance document to outline the best approaches to partnering with ONI and how to incorporate established procedures for working with ONI into activity budgets and implementation plans.

An additional area of focus for capturing best practices during the reporting period was in implementing "micro-project" activities within a grant. BFRP found that including time and funds for beneficiary-led initiatives, or micro-projects, to be developed and implemented under a larger grant can strengthen the impact of an activity and motivate participants to continue building toward the broader objectives of the activity. The SGSMs and DCOP produced another guidance document for micro-project implementation, including when to include them in a grant activity, how to work with grantees and beneficiaries to develop them, and how to account for them in the activity budget, implementation plan, and MEL plan. These documents have helped to standardize approaches and procedures across all three programming offices and will serve as a valuable resource during BFRP's final activity development.